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The School of Libanius in Late Antique Antioch by R. CRIBIORE

Review by: Gavin Kelly

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CRIBIORE (R.) **The School of Libanius in Late Antique Antioch.** Princeton UP, 2007. Pp. 360. £26.95. 9780691128245.

Libanius of Antioch's surviving works include 64 orations, 51 declamations and over 1,500 letters. The sheer quantity of what survives makes any investigation of Libanius an intimidating prospect, though in compensation the scholarly ground is notably uncrowded. There are several Libaniuses: he is perhaps best known as the author of the magnificent 'funeral oration' on Julian the Apostate (in fact a biography) and the eloquent defence of polytheism in his speech for the Temples, but Libanius the pagan is barely mentioned in this book. Instead the focus is on Libanius as the best-attested educator of antiquity. In *Gymnastics of the Mind* (2001), Cribiore focused on education through the papyrus evidence from Hellenistic and Roman Egypt, and here too the attention is very much closely focused on a distinct archive (there are occasional corrections of the interpretations of scholarly predecessors, most notably Petit's *Les étudiants de Libanius* (1956)). At the centre are nuanced readings of Libanius' letters – whether reporting to pupils' parents and grandparents, giving references for job-hunters, or cultivating his successful alumni – and some of his speeches. An appendix of nearly 100 pages contains translations of 206 letters arranged in dossiers according to the students they deal with. Both the fact that the vast majority of these often difficult and allusive texts have not previously been translated into English, and the profound insights exhibited by the main body of the text on the social conventions which underlie them, mean that this is a significant contribution on ancient epistolography as well as on the history of education. This evidence is supported by reference to the works of other contemporary sophists like Themistius, Himerius and Eunapius, by the author's earlier papyrological work, by archaeological evidence of late Roman schools, and by a few comparanda from other periods. These include educational treatises from the second century, as well as the letters of a tenth-century Byzantine professor and a fifteenth-century German publisher whose sons were studying in Paris – cross-cultural comparisons which prove entirely justified (C. also leavens the book with occasional comparisons to the modern academy).

The focus on primary evidence makes this one of those books that reads rather like the transcription of a card index – no criticism, when a vast amount of data is well organized and fitted into an elegant narration. The chapters deal in order with: introducing Libanius and his school (with a fine character sketch, 15–24); what we know of educational opportunities across the Roman East in the fourth century; the careful use of a network of friends and former pupils to attract new students; admissions and reports procedures; two chapters on teaching methods and the curriculum, and one on the later careers of Libanius' alumni. Where C. probably differs most from her predecessors is on emphasizing

the limitations of the evidence (Libanius did not need to maintain a correspondence with local Antiochene pupils and their families), and in showing, against Petit, that shorter periods of study of perhaps a couple of years were the norm, rather than the extended period of study which the sophist himself had experienced and would have wished for them. If a criticism must be made, it is that the translated letters in the appendix are somewhat sparsely annotated, and that in order to work out what is going on in a given letter, the reader will often need to use the index to find discussion in the text. It is a reminder how much we need a complete annotated bilingual edition of the letters, to complement the existing partial translations of Norman, Bradbury and now C. This, then, is a valuable – and extremely readable – contribution, which brings attention to underused and important evidence. And any future anthologist of school reports will want to include Libanius' letter of AD 355 to the grandfather of two brothers (*Ep.* 465 = C.'s letter 60): "To a man God granted one thing but denied the other" ... You too were granted one thing but not the other. Diophantus cares for self control and rhetoric and is in both areas such as to gladden his father, but the other should not have been born.'

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MASSAR (N.) **Soigner et servir. Histoire sociale et culturelle de la médecine grecque à l'époque hellénistique.** (Culture et Cité 2). Paris: De Boccard, 2005, Pp. 338. €33. 9782701801858.

This study, a revised PhD thesis from the Free University of Brussels, promises, in essence, nothing less than a new social history of doctors in the Greek world. It concentrates on the Hellenistic era, but takes on board the archaic and classical periods as well. It comprehensively deals with the social relationships between healers – especially the so-called 'public doctor' (*iatros dêmosios*) – and the authorities appointing and employing them, such as city councils but also courts and individual rulers (by contrast, it has less to say on more 'marginal' groups such as rootcutters, druggsellers, midwives, miracle healers, etc.). The first part of the study ('Contextes d'une pratique et modes de reconnaissance sociale') discusses the methods and criteria by which doctors were recruited, assessed and appointed (particularly the *akroasis*, the public performance contest in which doctors had to 'prove themselves'), issues of funding, taxation and remuneration, and the specific terms of the honours and privileges attributed to doctors by cities and rulers in recognition of their services to the community. It further discusses professional mobility and the perception of doctors as itinerant, and therefore fundamentally 'alien' (*xenos*) to the communities that appointed them – an ambivalence that, paradoxically, contributed to doctors' reputation